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Summary record of the 19th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 118: Programme planning (A/55/6 (Introduction and programmes 1 to 25), A/55/16, A/55/63, A/55/73, A/55/85; A/C.5/55/14, A/C.5/55/17, A/C.5/55/18, A/C.5/55/19 and A/C.5/55/20)

1. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) on behalf of the Secretary-General, presented the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/55/6 (Introduction and programmes 1 to 25)). The structure and format of the plan had been strengthened as compared with the plans of previous periods; a special effort had been made to reflect more accurately the essence of each programme and subprogramme and the purpose of the Organization's activities. Objectives, strategies and indicators of achievement had been established for each subprogramme, and an effort had been made to ensure that the presentation corresponded more closely to the requirements of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8). The experience acquired in preparing the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 had thus been taken into account.

2. Compliance with the Regulations and Rules was not simply an end in itself; its purpose was to produce a clearer document that could provide a better basis for the preparation of the programme budgets for future bienniums. A greater sense of the objectives and of the activities best suited to meeting them would allow the Organization to be in a better position to assess its success in programme implementation.

3. As the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) had recognized during its consideration of the proposed medium-term plan at its fortieth session, the new elements of the plan had increased its clarity and transparency in programme design. However, CPC had also noted that a number of expected accomplishments and indicators needed improvement. Through further experience and dialogue with the Fifth Committee and CPC, the Secretariat could make additional improvements in the presentation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

4. CPC had also asked the Secretariat to analyse the implications of the new format of the proposed medium-term plan on the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle. The report on the impact of that analysis (A/C.5/55/14) stressed the linkage between the different stages of the cycle and indicated that the increased sense of direction of the proposed medium-term plan would provide a solid basis for implementing the other phases of the cycle.

5. The medium-term plan reflected the issues which Member States, through their mandates, had entrusted to the United Nations. The plan covered a broad range of activities involving various intricately interconnected issues. In the area of peace and security, the programmes for political affairs, disarmament and peacekeeping would endeavour to reduce the number of conflicts and to bring about the peaceful settlement of those which arose, working in tandem with the humanitarian and human rights programmes in their efforts to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. Post-conflict situations would call for peacekeeping operations and special political missions in support of peace-building efforts, and the promotion of and respect for international law would contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

6. In the economic and social sectors, programmes would address global and regional development trends and policies, gender issues, social development, population, statistics, public administration, trade and development, technology, finance, the environment, human settlements and human rights. In response to calls for international action to address financial and economic disturbances, it would also pay particular attention to refugee flows, drug trafficking, terrorism, global health threats, illicit flows of arms and transnational crime. Follow-up to the high-level international intergovernmental event on financing for development, which would take place in 2001, would provide an impetus for the better handling of globalization and related development issues in the coming years.

7. The special situation of Africa would continue to receive attention and assistance from the United Nations. In addition to programme 8 on the New Agenda for Development for Africa, a new subprogramme entitled "Development of Africa" under programme 9 (Trade and development) was being proposed in response to a request of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. The plan also recognized the dignity and worth of the human person; the different impact that the work of the Organization

had on various target groups; increased awareness of the need for gender sensitivity in designing programmes, projects and activities; and the need to make best use of technological developments in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization's activities. Lastly, the Secretary-General proposed that the priorities for the period 1998-2001 should be maintained in the period 2002-2005 (A/55/6 (Introduction), para. 26).

8. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) had carefully reviewed the proposed medium-term plan and, following constructive discussions with representatives of the Secretary-General, it had reached agreement on all but one programme. In addition, it had made recommendations in most areas on adjustments to the proposals of the Secretary-General. Also, in response to the request of the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, the other Main Committees of the General Assembly had placed on their agenda the consideration of the relevant parts of the medium-term plan. The First, Second, Third and Sixth Committees had already transmitted to the Chairman the outcome of their deliberations. It should be noted in that connection that very few Member States had submitted comments.

9. The Secretary-General had made an effort in document A/55/6 to submit a clear and transparent policy document that was in full compliance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning and which aspired to address the problems that lay ahead. By approving the medium-term plan, the General Assembly would not only entrust the Secretary-General and his staff with the implementation of the programmes but would also commit Member States to provide active and continuous political and financial support. In an Organization comprised of sovereign and equal Members, the work of the Secretariat could not be a substitute for the will of Members to pursue the Organization's objectives. Programme implementation was not the exclusive preserve of the Secretariat or of Member States. It was a collective responsibility and would be a measure of the success of the partnership between Member States and the Secretariat.

10. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), introducing the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its fortieth session (A/55/16), said that the Committee had adopted all of its conclusions and recommendations by consensus. With regard to programme-related issues, the Committee had considered the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and had focused particular attention on the relevance of the 25 programmes to established mandates and to the provisions of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. The results of the Committee's deliberations were contained in paragraphs 13 to 271 of its report. In view of its complexity and the large number of draft amendments that had been proposed, programme 19, Human rights, had been returned to the General Assembly for a more detailed consideration. The remaining programmes were recommended for approval with those revisions that had been proposed and approved by consensus.

11. With regard to programme performance for the biennium 1998-1999 and the report of the Secretary-General on ways in which the full implementation and quality of the mandated programmes and activities could be ensured and could be better assessed by and reported to Member States (A/55/85), it should be pointed out that the Committee had noted with appreciation the high implementation rate and the inclusion in the report of qualitative assessments which should in future be more specific and more in compliance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. The Committee had also considered various reports on programme evaluation submitted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/55/63, E/AC.51/2000/2, E/AC.51/2000/3, E/AC.51/2000/4 and E/AC.51/2000/5) and had concluded that, in general, the Office had made useful recommendations, which, if implemented, would help to improve management.

12. With regard to the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/55/186), the Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should give further consideration to all the aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals and had stressed that the preliminary estimates should be adequate for the full implementation of all mandated programmes. It had expressed regret, however, that full information on the preliminary estimate of resources was not available in the proposed budget outline, despite the fact that in its resolution 53/206, the General Assembly had requested that provisions should be made in the budget outline for expenditures for special political missions related to peace and security

expected to be extended or approved in the course of the biennium. The Committee also emphasized that Member States should demonstrate their commitment to the United Nations by meeting their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and with the United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules. Lastly, the Committee had recommended approval of the priorities proposed by the Secretary-General for the biennium 2002-2003 and had indicated that the size of the contingency fund should be 0.75 per cent of the budget outline.

13. The Committee had also considered a number of documents on coordination questions, including the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for 1999 (E/2000/53). The Committee for Programme and Coordination had concurred with the approach adopted in that report and had made specific recommendations to ACC concerning future annual reports (paragraphs 289 to 296).

14. The Committee had also taken note of the Secretary-General's report on the progress that had been made in the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (E/AC.51/2000/6 and Corr.1) and had stressed the importance of resource mobilization for the Special Initiative and of the common strategic framework for action which the Committee had requested at its thirty-eighth session. It had also stressed the need for an independent evaluation of the Special Initiative. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations were contained in paragraphs 305 to 308 of its report.

15. Lastly, the Committee had taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the draft system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005 (E/AC.51/2000/7) and had recommended that the plan should be considered prior to its submission to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly.

16. The Committee had recognized the timeliness of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on private sector involvement and cooperation with the United Nations system (A/54/700), and had noted that the issue was important and should be approached taking into account the integrity, independence and international character of the United Nations system, as well as the need to adhere strictly to the relevant regulations and rules of the Organization and decisions of the General Assembly. The Committee had recommended that that report should be brought to the attention of the governing bodies of the organizations of the system, and had expressed its wish to be informed of further developments in relations between the United Nations system and the private sector.

17. With respect to improving the Committee's working methods and procedures within the framework of its mandate, the Committee had reaffirmed its commitment to meeting its terms of reference and had proposed various measures to facilitate the representation of States members of the Committee at a high level of expertise, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/197. It had also highlighted the need to improve the format of the medium-term plan; to include an item on the proposed medium-term plan in the agendas of the Economic and Social Council and the Main Committees of the General Assembly; and to ensure that the Secretariat's oral presentations of reports were brief and concise. Lastly, it had underlined the importance of effective implementation of its conclusions and recommendations, once they had been approved by the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly (A/55/16, Part Two, paras. 84-92).

18. **Ms. Gras** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Malta and Poland, and, in addition, Norway, said that she welcomed the new format of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the fact that it reflected the provisions of article IV of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the revision of which had been supported by the European Union. She fully agreed with CPC that the inclusion of expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement increased transparency in programme design.

19. The new format represented a real improvement over those of previous plans, whose degree of detail had not been user-friendly and, on occasion, had made it difficult to focus on the Organization's core activities. She hoped that, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on the impact of the format of the medium-term plan on the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle

(A/C.5/55/14), that unified format would provide for effective implementation of all phases of the cycle.

20. Not all sections of the proposed medium-term plan were of the same quality. In that connection, she agreed with the recommendations of CPC on possible improvements, and supported them, on the understanding that they constituted a negotiated whole. She also shared the views of CPC on the growing importance of evaluation of programme delivery, which was necessary for measuring the results obtained and the effectiveness of activities, as indicated in the introduction of the proposed medium-term plan. The European Union was in favour of continued improvement of those procedures, and supported the recommendations of CPC on that subject.

21. She also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/55/73); shared the views of CPC on the inclusion of qualitative assessments in that report, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/207; and hoped that that type of evaluation would be further refined in the future.

22. She fully endorsed the paragraphs of the introduction of the proposed medium-term plan that gave a clear and concise summary of the major challenges which the Organization would face in the period 2002-2005, as well as the description of the policy orientation and strategy for meeting those challenges. The priorities of the proposed medium-term plan were the same as those of the preceding plan. The new design of the plan could serve as a basis for considering the possibility of devising a hierarchy of the Organization's priorities.

23. Since the medium-term plan served as a framework for the formulation of the corresponding biennial programme budgets, priorities that were too general and covered virtually all United Nations activities did not facilitate budget preparation and resulted in the dispersal of the limited resources available. In that connection, she strongly supported the recommendation of CPC that the priorities for the period 2002-2005 should be as recommended by the Secretary-General and that that should not be taken to mean the maintenance of the status quo in programme implementation. Accordingly, the budget for the biennium 2002-2003 should take into account the priorities that might emerge, particularly in the maintenance of international peace and security, promotion of human rights, effective coordination of humanitarian assistance, drug control and crime prevention.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.